

Time travel virtually possible

June 25 2012

A virtual time-machine will be officially unveiled in St Andrews this weekend (June 23-24, 2012), allowing people the opportunity to explore St Andrews Cathedral, Scotland's largest medieval church, as it was in its prime.

Today St Andrews Cathedral is a ruinous monument, but 700 years ago it was the seat of [Scotland](#)'s leading bishops (and from 1472 archbishops). On Sunday 24 June, 2012 academics from the University of St Andrews will officially launch an online, 3D reconstruction of the cathedral, at the free Food For Thought event being held in St Salvator's Quadrangle from 12 noon.

Visitors will be able to create their own avatars and navigate their way around the online reconstruction; exploring the cloisters, the internal choir section, the chapter house, and the nave. There will be historic characters so visitors will be able to chat (using headphones and microphone) with Robert the Bruce, an Augustinian Friar and perhaps "The Old Grey Lady" a ghost reported to haunt the building. The experience is intended to give users a new perspective on Scottish history, accessible across the generations.

The virtual cathedral is the result of a collaboration between computer scientists, 3D designers, art historians and archaeologists, and is similar to multi-player computer games but differ in the important respect that their appearance, interactive characteristics, content and purpose are all programmable. This technology offers the potential of providing the core of the future 3D Internet.

Dr Alan Miller of the School of Computer Science said: “To walk around the reconstruction of St Andrews Cathedral enables one to appreciate the magnificent achievement of its construction over 600 years ago. We have worked together to take a vision, achieved through decades of scholarship, of how this building was - and make it accessible to all.”

Dr Rebecca Sweetman of the School of Classics said:

“The collaborative work of the reconstruction of St Andrews cathedral brings together some of the universities oldest and newest Schools over its 600 year history. In the spirit of this the reconstruction enables the modern viewer to experience the past through contemporary methods and on-going research.”

The Food for Thought event at which the virtual cathedral will be launched is part of the University’s on-going 600th Anniversary celebrations. The family lunch event brings together local food producers and hands-on learning activities – to help feed active minds young and old.

The Quad will be open to all; giving free access to the University’s mobile science unit, rocket-building workshops (building rockets out of a 2-litre plastic bottles), and beginners anatomy for kids among other activities. Stall holders from the St Andrews Farmers Market will also be at the event selling local produce including cheeses, fruit kebabs, cooked meats, confectionary and home-baking.

The event builds on the success of last year’s Mediaeval Banquet which saw over 300 people join in a variety of mediaeval entertainments and share a hog roast.

While last year’s event celebrated the past, this year’s event is intended as a celebration of the present - engaging the town with the University’s

research community, and raising local pride in local teaching and research.

Provided by University of St Andrews

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